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CIA Comments on
The Greater-Than-Expected Soviet Threat

A. General

The discussion of the relationship of the GTET to the USIB National Intelligence Projections for Planning (NIPP) is overly precise. A combination of all the high NIPP forces represents--in itself--what the intelligence community considers to be a greater-than-expected threat. That is, it is intended to represent a posture quite unlikely to be sought in its totality, given our appreciation of the balance between gross Soviet capabilities and the various technical, institutional, and political factors at work. The foreword to NIPP-68 is explicit in identifying the basis for these projections.

Selective excursions above the NIPP levels--when these are designed solely to test the adequacy of US assured destruction forces--are essentially non-estimative. Though we believe it is practical to use the NIPP as a base case for such excursions, it is probably unnecessary, and perhaps misleading, to attempt to relate the GTET excursions to agreed intelligence judgments in probabilistic terms.

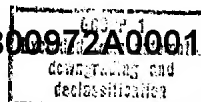
B. Overall Technological and Resource Considerations

The details of weapons systems characteristics used to structure the GTET are in most cases similar to systems characteristics discussed in National Intelligence Estimates or defined in National Intelligence Projections for Planning. Except in a few cases we believe that these are consistent with the levels of technology that the Soviets either have now available, or may reach, in the time frame postulated. For the Soviets to make the technological advances necessary to develop all the specified weapons options on this schedule would, however, call for concentrated efforts and parallel degrees of success in virtually all major areas of weapons R&D. Such uniform progress across the board is well beyond Soviet capabilities.

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A Soviet effort to accomplish the GTET in addition to a posture incorporating the highs of other NIPP forces would require--beginning about now--a substantial reordering of national priorities. It would create major new economic disruptions and would be bound to exacerbate divisions within the political leadership. The costs to other national political and economic objectives are not precisely measurable, but the effects on economic growth and consumer welfare would certainly jeopardize many stated objectives of the government and expectations of consumers. A policy shift of this magnitude would also be accompanied by numerous external indicators of economic change and political tension. These would become detectable to intelligence well in advance of the development of the threat.

If, on the other hand, the USSR were to pursue the selected strategic programs in the GTET in conjunction with a posture in its other forces on the order of the low NIPP projections, fewer resource allocation problems at the national level would arise. There would, however, probably still be an increase in the temperature of political and military debate, in this case over the utility of building massive strategic forces at the expense of insufficient attention to conventional forms of military power. Again, the program and policy implications of such a course would probably be detectable.

C. Comments on Individual Programs

As new evidence is received and the estimate cycle for NIPP-69 progresses, we expect that modifications will be made in the system definitions and force levels projected. In some cases new intelligence leads us to believe that the USSR could achieve a particular capability somewhat sooner than the GTET gives them credit for; in others, we think there might be a phasing or resource problem between the time a particular technological capability is reached and the time the quantities specified in the GTET. We address these points in the following comments:

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ICBM Capabilities: Footnote "g" on Table 3 gives the SS-11 retrofit missile a CEP of 0.25 nautical miles starting in 1976. We believe that if the Soviets were to decide to concentrate on improving accuracy, their state-of-the-art would probably permit them to attain a .25 nm CEP by about 1972. We have not yet seen any evidence that this is an urgent Soviet goal, however.

Table 9 shows operational deployment of the SS-Z-2 (now called the SS-13 by the intelligence community) solid propellant missile with a two-MIRV capability beginning in 1972. The SS-Z-2 without a MIRV could start to become part of the operational force by mid-1969 if the fixed launchers now under construction are completed. We believe this system will have a single warhead delivery capability when initially deployed.

We believe that the Soviets have the capability to deploy a mobile version of the SS-Z-2 system as early as 1970, whereas Table 9 shows this capability in 1972. An earlier system, however, would have had only the most limited testing by that time.

The GTET projections for both the SS-11 and the SS-9 are somewhat too low if intended to reflect current evidence, and much too low if intended to reflect gross capabilities to deploy. We project a minimum of 640 SS-11 launchers and 228 SS-9's at the present time, and believe the ultimate force may reach as high as 700 and 250, respectively. New construction for these two programs appears to be levelling off.

Fractional Orbital Bombardment System Launchers: Soviet testing activities during the past year, involving both FOBS and low apogee ICBM trajectories, will probably result in changes in the projected deployment numbers and characteristics for the SS-X-6 compared to NIPP-68. A true FOBS system does not yet appear to be available for deployment this year, but could be fully tested by sometime in 1969. On the other hand, the Soviets could have a deboosted low trajectory ICBM ready to begin deployment in the near future.

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These systems will be discussed in greater detail in NIE 11-8-68 and NIPP-69. Without more evidence on qualitative capabilities it is difficult to suggest a rationale for their employment or to project the numbers the Soviets might desire.

Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles: We recommend that an explanatory footnote be added to explain the assumptions about "on line" and "on station" SLBM launchers in relation to the total force. The GTET posture cannot be related directly to the NIPP because of what appears to be different measures of operational readiness and we cannot tell what effect these differences would have on measures of assured destruction.

Independently Targeted Missile Warheads: The projected MIRV characteristics and deployment dates in the GTET appear to be technically feasible. The combination of the MIRV warhead threat and the ABM threat, on the deployment schedules indicated in the GTET would, however, present the Soviets with unusually severe demands for nuclear materials and warhead fabrication capacity. This point is addressed more fully in the later paragraph on total force loadings.

Interceptors: The Soviets have continued to retain older model fighters in service longer than expected. The numbers of Fresco, Farmer, and Flashlight aircraft included in the GTET actually are slightly less than the expected force levels. This seems to be a departure from the ground rules stated for the GTET.

The GTET also makes no mention of substantial numbers of tactical fighters available for defensive duty. Although these aircraft are not included in the strategic defense forces, Soviet air defense capabilities would be improved by the use of the tactical air forces in air defense role.

Airborne Warning and Control System: Recent evidence suggests that some aircraft of a developing Soviet AWAC system could be brought into service

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before 1970. If the Soviets choose to push the program, the GTET deployment levels could probably be reached up to a year earlier than indicated.

Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems: Of all the strategic programs specified in the GTET, we feel that the projected deployment levels of the ABM-Z-1 and ABM-Z-2 are the least likely to be pursued by the Soviets. For the USSR to develop, produce, deploy, and operate forces of the projected size on the time schedule given would require an approximate doubling of the already sizeable level of investment resources allocated annually to strategic defensive weapons. Moreover, in view of the developing US penetration threat, we consider it even more unlikely that they would elect to go into ABM deployment on this scale until a more sophisticated system could be developed and thoroughly tested. There is evidence that the Soviets do not now plan to complete all of the original ABM sites at Moscow and are probably trying to improve the system. We also believe that the USSR is probably limited in its capabilities to produce the necessary numbers of computers on the schedules and in the quantity that would be required by the GTET deployments. Such a system would strain, and probably exceed, Soviet computer and programming software technology.

Nuclear Weapons Force Loading: While the infeasibility of the GTET forces cannot be demonstrated on the basis of our knowledge of nuclear materials availability, we have serious doubts that the weapons loading for the GTET forces could be accomplished in conjunction with the high NIPP projections in other forces. The availability of sufficient plutonium and the industrial capacity to produce the required weapons mix would be particularly questionable.

During the period covered by the GTET, about 15,000 new warheads would be needed for ABM's and MIRV's. The surface-to-air missile systems and the high NIPP theater forces would also be generating new requirements for almost an equal amount. Simultaneous pursuit of all these programs would require plutonium in excess of what we believe will be available.

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New production reactors could be constructed but even if these are begun soon and pursued on an urgent basis, they probably would not be able to overcome the materials problem for some time. Before the first effects of new capacity could be felt, the combined lead times for reactor construction, irradiation and cooling of the first fuel batch, metal separation and forming, and warhead fabrication would have had to overcome. This probably would exceed three years even if reactor construction were pursued on a crash basis. There is no evidence of such programs.


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